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SPEECH

OF THE

HON. FRANCIS W. PICKENS,

OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

On the 23d of May, 1836,

THE HOUSE BEING IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

ON THE

FORTIFICATION BILL.

WASHINGTON:

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1836.



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SPEECH OF MR. PICKENS,

OF SOUTH CAROLINA ;

Delivered in the House of Representatives, May 23, 1836, the House being in Committee of the Whole on the

FORTIFICATION BILL.

Mr. PICKENS said it was not agreeable for him to trespass upon the attention of the committee, and he trusted he never could be induced to do so except from considerations of duty.

Mr. Chairman: This debate has taken a wide range, and doctrines have been advanced and sentiments avowed, against which I feel bound to raise my most solemn protest. The chairman of the Committee of "Ways and Means" (Mr. Cambreleng) withdrew an amendment on a former bill embracing the same principles, but declared that he would consider the whole debate as open upon the present occasion.

However, before I proceed to reply to what has been advanced by other gentlemen, I propose to make a few observations on the general principles which shall govern my vote on the bill immediately under the consideration of the committee.

As to appropriations towards those fortifications calculated to give efficiency and protection to our navy, I perhaps would be inclined to go as far as most gentlemen. I am in favor of those that are important for these purposes, and no other, so far as the Atlantic coast is concerned. I look upon it as one of the most idle and visionary schemes that has ever been conceived, to attempt a military line of fortifications on our Atlantic coast similar to those which European governments have adopted. Our population, comparatively speaking, is sparse, and we have a coast equal in extent to the whole western coast of Europe. Under these circumstances, our resources would not justify an attempt to encircle ourselves with a system of fortifications on a plan similar to those which more populous and far less extensive countries have adopted. Besides, we have no border powers against which it may be necessary to protect ourselves. We are remote from all other powers—with an immense and increasing commerce. Our physical position, and all the circumstances with which we are surrounded, proclaim a navy to be our only system of enlarged national defence. Our expenditures for fortifications ought to be made exclusively with a view to give protection and energy to our navy. With our extensive coast, you may make fortifications for land defence, and have your system, as you may suppose, perfect; but give your enemy ascendancy upon the ocean, and they will land their forces at whatever points they may think proper. No commercial country can rely for defence upon any thing but a well regulated navy.

Our true policy of defence is to increase and strengthen it by judicious points of fortification, so as to enable us to protect our whole coast by a stronger naval power than any nation would be able to concentrate against us. With this view, and looking to the natural division of our coast into four great bays, as it were,—the first from Passamaquaddy to Cape Cod, the second from Cape Cod to Cape Hatteras, the third from Cape Hatteras to Cape Florida, and the fourth to the Sabine,—I would say that extensive navy yards with efficient fortifications, should be established at the most suitable points between these different capes, so that an ordinary naval force, with brave and enterprising men, could easily defend the whole frontier, and at the same time protect our commerce. For instance, I would have such a navy-yard with fortifications at or near Boston—the same at or near New York—then at Norfolk and the mouth of the Chesapeake—the same at Charleston—and then at Pensacola, for the defence of the gulph and the commerce of the West. I would place these points on the best and strongest footing, equal to any in Europe, and make little or no expenditures on any other point, so far as our Atlantic frontier is concerned.

It is all idle and visionary to attempt to place our coast in a perfect state of defence by stationary fortifications—this can alone be done by those that move upon the face of the deep. There is scarcely any fortification but what can be passed under favorable tides and winds, and it is a military maxim that there is none but what can be taken. Look to those that were erected at Antwerp, with so much skill and labor, on the same plan of fortress Monroe, and which Bonaparte himself pronounced impregnable, and what was the result? The French battered them to the ground in twenty-four hours. The truth is, that for an invading force on land we must at last rely upon “high minds and brave hearts,” with bayonets, and not fortifications. Besides, sir, the genius of our institutions is at war with a standing army. But extend your visionary and wanton schemes of fortifications, and they call for an increased force to keep them in repair. Sir, I rejoice to say, that I believe the majority of the officers of your present army are men worthy to be trusted with the liberties of their country. But increase your military points, and call for a corresponding increase of men, and then place all under profligate and ambitious rulers, and there is no patriot who will not tremble for the consequences to his country.

Mr. Chairman: There has been a great change in the condition and resources of our country within the last few years. Under the application of steam power to our coast and rivers, remote sections have been brought together, and the energies of the community have been condensed. Our weakness, arising from a sparse population, has been to a great extent overcome. If this be the effect of steam as applicable to the water, what must be the operation of things under the tremendous schemes that are now in progress to bring the interior West to the sea coast by means of railroads? I would rather have one railroad running from our coast into that brave and enterprising country, for the purposes of defence, than all the fortifications your overflowing treasury can erect. For military purposes, heretofore, communities have been strong in proportion to the denseness of their population. But the recent triumphs of invention and art over nature seem likely to develope new energy and resources, and may change the whole scheme of military defences in an extensive and widely populated country. Under these views, I shall never vote for any fortification that cannot be shown to be

necessary for the strength and support of the navy. I would desire to have but *few* points, and place them on the most liberal and substantial basis. It is nothing but a wanton waste of the public money to attempt to embrace too many interests, and cover too many points.

But, sir, I will now look at the operation of this system in another point of view. While you have been expending, for the last twenty years, millions upon millions in certain sections of this Union, other extensive sections have been to a great extent entirely neglected. When my colleague (Mr. Thompson) some weeks since, with so much ability, demonstrated the unequal operation of your naval appropriations, he drew but a just picture of this Government in all its fiscal operations. As to our navy I am disposed to make some allowances for its appropriations heretofore, from the fact that our tonnage has been owned by us, and our large commercial transactions have, in a great measure, taken place in those sections where the demand and supplies for a navy and its appurtenances were naturally called for. But we have now reached a new era in our history, when other sections and other interests must be attended to. Here, where your Government has been profuse in its expenditures for the defence of those portions of your country which you boast of being naturally the strongest, while you have neglected those portions which you have proclaimed to be the weakest. Is this the sound policy that should direct the energies of a fostering Government to protect equally the exposed points of a united people?

Let it not be supposed that we complain of the unequal disbursements, merely for the dollars and cents involved. No; it is because the operation is deeply connected with the great principles of liberty. As a people under one Government, we present a different state of things from any other people. We are one for certain great purposes, and separate for others. As far as the pecuniary and fiscal transactions of Government are concerned, it is not to be disguised that we have sectional interests differently affected. As far as the States are concerned, we have in each peculiar sentiments, habits, and feelings. To preserve these is the very essence of our separate independence and existence. No people can be free and independent who are habitually and systematically excluded from the favors and benefits of the Government that acts upon them. Let it become fixed, as a settled policy, that the West and the South are only to feel this Government in its exactions, while other sections are to feel it in its disbursements—let it be known that we are to be converted into Roman provinces, from which you are to collect treasure and wealth to be distributed amongst those who may be styled “Roman citizens”—and then, sir, if such a system is to last—if this state of things is to be continued—you will soon see, under it, our industry and enterprise droop and grow dull; you will see our spirits wither and die; genius will turn from lofty aspiration; our people will lose their burning feeling of patriotism; and from manly independence we will tamely sink down to become serfs and vassals under a mighty empire, where even the very boundaries of the States will be lost and forgotten amid the ruin and desolation thrown over a broken and disheartened country!

It is useless and idle, at this period of the world, to talk about liberty, so far as it may be identified with personal rights and individual protection. These stand secured, and are, to a great extent, consecrated in the feelings and institutions of every civilized community on earth. In those great struggles which ended in the overthrow of feudal barbarism, the contest was

for individual and personal liberty. But since the combination of the Holy Alliance, together with all the improvements and schemes of modern society, everything seems to tend towards an amalgamation of all christendom into one system of organization, and the great contest now is for the political independence of separate communities. This view becomes deeply interesting to us as independent States. An habitual exclusion of any portion of the States of this confederacy from the fiscal benefits of this Government, and power over its action, must end in a sacrifice of their political independence. Hence it is, that political power becomes deeply identified with political liberty. A people to be free must feel that they are so.

Compare these great principles with what now actually exists, and what has existed for the last twenty years. In that period of time this Government has collected \$420,000,000, and after throwing out of the calculation the \$130,000,000, which have been appropriated for the payment of the public debt, we then have left \$290,000,000, of which \$210,000,000 have been disbursed in the Middle and Northern sections, while only \$80,000,000 have been disbursed in all the other sections.

Let not gentlemen suppose that the West and the South are factions, when they oppose this system of disbursements. No! they see involved in it the highest interests and even the liberties of their country.

I come now to what has been advanced by others in the progress of this debate. The Chairman of the "Ways and Means" observed that the revenue system which this Government had adopted for the last twenty years, was the most unjust and oppressive that was ever adopted by any civilized Government. In this, sir, I agree with him. He also said that the commencement of this system was the tariff of 1816. To a considerable extent, I agree with him here too. But when he came to assert that the "compromise bill" was the consummation of that system, I confess I could not exactly understand him. There are principles in this bill which by no means receive my approbation. The gentleman spoke of the evils complained of from the surplus in the treasury, and intimated that if it had not been for the "compromise," a system would have been adopted which would have reduced the revenue now down to the wants of the Government. All this sounded very well from the gentleman in one part of his remarks. But when he came to another part, where he was attempting to defeat the "land bill," or any other just distribution of this surplus amongst the States, I confess I was astonished to see the gentleman labor so hard to prove that there was and would be *no surplus*.

He entered into a long calculation to show that there would be no more than the wants of the Government would require. At one moment, he denounced the "compromise" as producing the evils of the surplus, to show how much better others could have done for the country; and then when he desired to retain what was in the treasury from a distribution, he attempts to prove that the same "compromise" has produced no surplus beyond what the Government will actually want. I leave the gentleman to reconcile this palpable absurdity and contradiction in his argument, if argument it can be called. But, sir, this contradiction was not more astonishing to me than the reasoning by which he jumped at his conclusions. He spoke loudly on the "ebbs and floods" of importations and exportations; and from something connected with these "ebbs and floods" which he knew of, he asserted that two years hence our importations would not exceed \$40,000,000, and upon

this our imposts would yield \$10,000,000 of revenue. (Here Mr. Cambreleng explained, and said that he meant the dutiable articles would not exceed that amount, but admitted that the importations would amount to \$150,000,000.) Mr. Pickens resumed, and said he did not so understand the gentleman before. But if the gentleman admits that our importations will equal \$150,000,000, I am totally at a loss to perceive how he comes to the conclusion that our customs will then yield only \$10,000,000. The system is biennial in its reduction, and then only amounting to ten per cent. If the whole importations are \$150,000,000, unless the proportions vary entirely from what they have been heretofore, the dutiable articles must equal \$66,000,000, and this must yield a revenue of \$17,000,000, instead of \$10,000,000. No, sir; with our increasing and wide spreading population, stretching itself over the exuberant valleys of the Mississippi—the vast schemes of internal improvements developing the resources of the interior—industry and enterprise invigorating the remotest quarters of our land—all, all, proclaim the increasing means of a great people with corresponding wants and demands. Under this prospect of things, I should be induced to think that in two years more our importations would reach \$170,000,000, and that our customs would yield \$18,000,000. Your exports in cotton alone for the year ending on the 1st of last October, sold for \$73,000,000, and this year they will probably reach near \$90,000,000. This was the article which, in the plenitude of your wisdom, you pronounced over produced three years ago, when we raised less than ten hundred thousand bags, and sold it for less than nine cents, and you declared that production had then out-run demand. Last year we raised above 300,000 bags more, and sold it, notwithstanding your over-production, for sixteen cents. No man can foretell the developments of this country under a wise system of free trade. No man can foresee the immense increase of importations and exportations of a free and unrestrained people, with the freshness of the virgin wilderness before them.

The gentleman cannot make the surplus vanish by figures. Even if all the reasonable expenditures that have been officially asked for be made, we will have, on the first of January next, at least \$46,000,000 of surplus in the treasury, supposing the public lands to yield \$17,000,000; and many put them as high as \$25,000,000. Good faith and prudence demand that this should be deposited, not in the corporations of the States, but in the treasury of the separate States themselves, in proportion to their federal representation, they being responsible for its repayment. This would give us the faith and credit of the States instead of the banks. But of this and of the gentleman's argument on the "land bill," I will say more on another occasion.

The gentleman, in his calculations to reduce the surplus, has placed \$7,000,000 to be appropriated for Indian treaties, and in this I suppose he is correct. He also put down \$5,000,000 for the Florida war. Mr. Chairman: I will not say that this is too much, but I will say that it is four times as much as it ought to have been. I will here take occasion also to say, that this is one of the most disgraceful wars that has ever occurred—disgraceful in its origin, and of no credit to those who have had the termination of the first campaign. I am rather induced to believe that the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Wise) has given us the true causes of this war. It is not improbable that it was engendered by iniquitous authority given to agents and others, who, under the vile pretext of seizing fugitive slaves and purchasing others before the emigration of the lawless savages could take place,

attempted in some instances to seize even the children of their chiefs for bondage and sale, and then committed imposition and outrage, until suffering nature could bear it no longer. I forbear to say more at present, for I may be misinformed, and I trust for humanity, and for the honor of our Government, that I may be. But I will say, that whatever may or may not have been the treatment of the Indians, I believe that many of those who have volunteered to defend your border have been, to say the least, treated with coldness and neglect. I do not stand here to complain for them. What they have suffered and borne, they have borne without a murmur, for the honor and character of their State. But representing, as I do, perhaps as many of these spirited men as any other gentleman, I take occasion to say that they volunteered their services, not as the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Adams) sneeringly says, because it was to them a "fat business," but to defend your exposed frontier, after this Government, from neglect and injustice, had involved us in a cruel and merciless war of plunder and murder. These very men who have so honorably sustained your stars and your stripes, were from amongst those whom your Government Press here, and its pensioned bands, have denounced for the last two years as traitors to their country. And what has been the fact? While they have gone forth to encounter hardship and exposure in vindication of your honor and your power, *those*, who some years since, were so eager to exhibit their *patriotism* by volunteering in a civil war of extermination to be waged on their own brethren, *have* made no move in this recent war to let off the *exuberance* of their *spirit*, but have kept back in that silence which belongs to their servility. After all that our citizens have done in this unfortunate savage war, it ill becomes the officer you placed there to command them, considering that he had but recently come fresh from the fields of his *triumph* in *manœuvering* and *stratagy*—I say it little becomes HIM to cast a *sneer* over them as "VOLUNTEERS," and not "*good troops*."

But, sir, to return. The gentleman from New York, (Mr. Cambreleng) to exhaust the surplus, has put down \$10,000,000 for the war in which we will be involved with Mexico on our southwestern borders.

Mr. Chairman; To say the least of it, this declaration, coming from one who bears such a relation to this House and country as the gentleman does, was as imprudent as any thing could well be. Every thing relating to the affairs of Texas involves questions of the deepest and most delicate interest, and it does not become us at present to say or do any thing that may lead to embarrassment. I trust there will be no war to which the gentleman alludes. Whatever may be the power or policy of those governments that are in their nature unlimited, I hold that, under our constitution, which we are sworn to defend, with its limited trust powers conferred on us for the interest and benefit of this people, we have no right to go into a war except purely for *self-defence*. There are certain great *moral* obligations which should ever bind governments as well as individuals, and which, particularly under our peculiar institutions, should never be forgotten on any occasion, no matter how *tempting*. A war with Mexico for *conquest* would lead to a conflict with European powers, the end of which it would not be easy to foretell. I have as much cause to feel sympathy as most gentlemen, for I had the companion of my boyhood—the friend of my maturer years—brave, chivalrous, and daring to the highest degree, inhumanly butchered in the fall of the Alamo. But I shall never suffer the feelings and sympathies of my

heart to prompt me, under impulse, to do any thing calculated to involve others in consequences the most serious, unless under a case of clear justification.

But, sir, whatever may have been the calculations of gentlemen, the recent glorious and triumphant victory gained to the arms of Texas has entirely dispelled them. I deprecated debate heretofore, because I feared that it might lead to consequences calculated to embarrass the negotiating power of this Government. I frankly avow that it is an object near and dear to my heart, to acquire Texas for this Union. Sir, I desire this, not as has been said, to extend the boundaries of slavery, but for the purpose of extending the boundaries of liberty. Who is there so cold and heartless that he would desire to limit the confines of this great and growing Republic? If *even* all the nations of Christendom were anxious to adopt our constitution, and cover themselves under its principles, is there a man here whose heart would not beat and whose eye would not kindle with joy at the anticipation of such an event. And who is there so narrow and contracted that would not extend our union and protection to those who are our neighbors—who speak our language—identified with us, as they are, in interest and in feeling—who went from our fire-sides and from our altars—who are our own brethren and relatives? Who is there amongst us that would turn his hand upon the hardy enterprise of a brave and daring people?

Yes, sir! they are ours by position—ours by all the sympathies of our nature—ours by all the bonds of interest—ours by all the ties that can bind man to his fellow man. I desire their union, not because it would strengthen the slaveholding States—I scorn to place it upon any such narrow grounds but because I desire to nurture with our fostering care a noble empire for the free, just now quickening into life—because I desire that our banner may float aloft, and that the whole race of civilized man shall sleep in peace under its broad and benignant folds.

Mr. Chairman: I come now to examine some of the abstract doctrines which fell from the gentleman from New York, (Mr. Cambreleng,) and which I heard with profound astonishment. The gentleman, after speaking of the triumphs of the democracy, proclaimed that he hoped the time was soon coming when the people would declare, in language not to be mistaken, “that no legislation should bind posterity.” Sir, if this sentiment had been uttered only by the colleague of the gentleman on my extreme right, (Mr. Moore,) it would have excited in me no attention, for I took that gentleman’s wild declamation to be better suited for the “loco foco” party in the streets of New York than for the halls of legislation. But coming as it did from the Chairman of the “Ways and Means,” who from his years and experience may be supposed not to speak without reflection, it is a doctrine which deserves the most serious attention of this country. I am aware that this doctrine claims for its origin high authority—authority which in my opinion has been looked to with full as much reverence as it deserves. I am aware that it has recently been promulgated in an ingenious pamphlet from Ohio against all corporations, and that it is openly preached in the Northern and Middle sections of this Union, where in all probability it will soon become the popular doctrine of the day.

What, sir! no legislation bind posterity!! Push this doctrine to its consequences, and where does it lead to? What becomes of your public faith? What becomes of your national honor? Let it be known that those trea-

ties which bind you in your intercourse with the nations of the earth, are to be disregarded and defied by the *whim*, the *interest*, or the ambition of the ascendant party of to-day, and we must then necessarily be excluded from civilized society. No legislation bind posterity!! What bore us in glory and in triumph through the war of our revolution, but that legislation which bound posterity to redeem the debt incurred to sustain your armies upon the field of battle? What sustained us through the second war of our independence, but the power to pledge the resources of this nation for the great purposes of self-preservation? Is this Congress to do nothing that can bind those who are to come after us? Go back at once and tear up your Declaration of Independence itself—scatter into a thousand pieces the parchment of your Constitution, and substitute, in the place thereof, the shouts of a mob proclaiming their triumphs of to-day, or the power of a lawless multitude waving over a blood-stained land the sceptre of anarchy to-morrow. No legislation bind posterity!! Where is faith? Where is honor? Where is public law? Where is public morality? Sir, this is a doctrine at war with peace, policy, and honor. It breaks down all that is venerable, virtuous, and consecrated in the institutions of civilization itself. If this be the doctrine that the gentleman, and the party with which he is identified, intend practically to enforce in this country, I can tell him that, when he attempts it, a hundred thousand plumes will wave over a hundred thousand lances, couched to vindicate all those sacred rights which have been acquired under the *plighted faith* of this Government.

But, sir, the gentleman dropped another remark that struck me with peculiar force. He asserted that the time would soon come when the Government should sell the public lands to none but emigrants who were actual settlers. Where is the right under the Constitution by which this Government would attempt to exclude any class of free citizens from purchases of the public domain? Where is the right by which you shall claim to distribute it amongst a particular class? If it be intended by this to feed the appetite and minister to the desires of that class who may have no peculiar ties or interests to bind them to the place of their nativity—if it be intended to catch that class who move through the land from one end to the other, having no home, and feeling for no country, then it is vile agrarianism. Has it come to this, that a man is to be excluded from the benefits and privileges under this Government because, by industry, economy, or enterprise, he should be so fortunate as to accumulate property, or because he may happen to be associated with others who have? Are citizens whose ties and interests may bind them to reside in one State, to be excluded from holding a freehold in another?

If this system of selling alone to a certain class, be intended by the gentleman as an equal division of the public domain, then he should remember that when the Roman people came to receive their distribution from the public granaries, they became prostituted and debased. When their conquering Generals came loaded with the spoils of devastated provinces, and were enabled to deal out bread and bounties to this class or that class, then, through bribery and corruption, they bought their way to power over the prostrate liberties of their country.

But the gentleman made another declaration, which I confess filled my heart with the most gloomy forebodings for the future. After speaking of the bloated state of things in the country at present, he concluded by declaring that “the whole nation was now one common gambling house!”

Considering the position he occupies in this House, and the relation he bears to the dominant party that now rules this confederacy—considering that from his residence, he must be intimately acquainted with the secret springs of speculation and commerce—I confess I heard this solemn declaration with no ordinary emotions. This nation one common gambling house! And who made it so? Let those who hold the reins of Government answer this awful question. Mr. Chairman, next to the omnipotence and omnipresence of that superintending Providence that moves upon the affairs of the world, there is no power that exercises so great an influence over the feelings, the sentiments, and the very nature of man, as the Government that acts upon him, and those who administer its authority. Let an individual become abandoned and profligate, and the consequences of his vice and iniquity are for the most part confined to himself, and those immediately around him. But let those who hold in their hands the destinies of a great people become corrupt and lawless—let them trample over the great fundamental principles of the Government—let them become ambitious and profligate—and the consequences are felt in the remotest circles of society; the highest and the lowest come under this tremendous influence. Look over the world and see its fairest portions, where civilization, art, and refinement once held their soft and mingled sway, now laid low in ruin and decay. Go, walk by the broken columns of the Parthenon, or stand on the grave of Miltiades—go and visit the tomb of Virgil, or the villas of Tully—and why is it that you hear no longer the voice of the orator, or see no more the poet and the warrior? Is it because the uplifted hand of God has for ever blighted those fairest portions of his creation? No, no; it comes from the iniquity of corrupt, *fallen*, ambitious *man*. It is his usurping hand that has laid these fair regions low, and made a degenerate, desponding, and broken hearted people.

And, sir, when it is now announced, that our “nation is one common gambling house,” let those who sit on the seats of power tremble for the future. They may pass through this world, and receive its applause—they may proclaim in triumph that they have received the approbation of their country, and when the gnawings of a guilty conscience shall be felt, they may pour upon it the sweet unction that rises from the huzzas of a passing mob; but when they shall have gone through these scenes, and shall come to that last sad day when the secrets and recesses of the human heart shall be laid open before a tribunal that is never deceived and that never errs—when they rise before the searching eye of an avenging God, then let the question be asked, who made this nation one common gambling house; and, if I mistake not, you will see them quake and tremble as did Babylon’s corrupt and revelling crew when they beheld upon the wall the handwriting that announced their guilt and proclaimed their destiny.

Mr. Chairman: I propose to examine, who “made us one common gambling house.” Another gentleman from New York, (Mr. McKean,) took this occasion to pass an eulogy upon the present administration. He also exhibited the claims of the different candidates for the Presidency, making all merely sectional, except *one*, who stood upon broad and enlarged principles that embraced the whole Union—who stood pledged to carry out the principles of the present administration. And this gentleman, at the conclusion of his remarks, with quite as much *modesty* as discretion, thought proper to read us a lecture on parties, deprecating all party topics, as not to be drawn into discussion on this great bill of so much interest. Yes, sir, this *Phara-*

saical party, who arrogate to themselves all *virtue*, and thank God that they are not as other men, have the effrontery to call upon us to hold our peace, while they stand pledged to carry out the principles of the present administration! Let us briefly look back and see what are these principles.

One of the first avowals of principle was the indirect pledge made by the President in his famous letter to the Tennessee Legislature, in which he laid it down that no member of Congress should be appointed to office during his membership, and for two years afterwards. The next great pledge made in the canvass was that no man should be dismissed from office for opinion sake. This principle was indirectly avowed by the war made upon those who were supposed to have done so. Then came the celebrated inaugural, in which *reform! reform!* stood out in bold relief in every line. The "Augean stables were to be cleansed." Now, I hold that the public pledges which a man makes before the world, are as binding upon him by all the principles of sound morality as his pledged honor in private, and he who would wantonly disregard the one would violate the other. Those public men who notoriously set at defiance all the pledges that they have ever made, go very far to set an example well calculated to produce looseness of morality and general profligacy, all tending to make the nation a common "gambling house," where falsehood and treachery hold a triumphant sway.

What has been the fact with reference to the first pledge, to which I have alluded? More members of Congress have been appointed to office than under any three administrations since the commencement of the Government. And as to dismissals from office for political opinions, I have only to state the remarkable fact, that in all the administrations of this Government up to the present, all the dismissals together amount to only seventy-four, while in this administration there have been upwards of *nine hundred*; and *two hundred and thirty* of them important officers. Is this the principle the gentleman (Mr. McKean) would advocate? As to the reform pledged in the inaugural, we have had it. This modern reform has come over us with all its blessings. True, there has been a change, but it has only been a change from those who were in office, to the vilest and most lawless crew that were ever raised up under the dispensations of Providence to scourge a degenerate and ungrateful people. Sycophancy and servility have taken the place of all the heroic and manly virtues. The rooks, together with obscene birds, have perched themselves in the high places of the land, and we sit here beneath surrounded daily with their filth and putrified corruption. Office holders (now become miserable dependants) and office seekers infest every turn and corner; and let it be known that any man has influence from his being the tool of those who have patronage to confer, and he is overwhelmed with the bowing and cringing of these slaves and beggars. Crowds of miserable hungry beings creep and crawl, in the darkness of midnight, through the hidden recesses and gloomy avenues that lead up to the throne of royal favor. These creatures, generated as they are in despotism, are pervading the country and becoming more loathsome than the creeping lice or "slimy frogs of Egypt" ever were in the days of God's judgments. This, sir, is the *reform* with which we are blessed.

Mr. Chairman, we cannot shut our eyes to what we see passing around us. The Government is virtually changed, and the people seem to be sinking into acquiescence. The dismissal of the first cabinet, upon the notorious principles involved, was an open avowal that arbitrary will should govern

even in private circles. The war waged upon all the constituted authorities of the land—upon the Supreme Court—upon the Senate—and even at first upon this House, because they were favorable to a recharter of the U. S. Bank—and then the appeals constantly made to the people as one aggregate mass—all, *all*, announced in language not to be mistaken, that the Constitutional Republic of States was to be broken down, and that a simple democracy of *brutal numbers*, with an elective and unlimited monarch, was to be raised over the ruins.

The President has habitually, through flattery, appealed to the passions and prejudices of all that is ignoble and low in society, to sustain him in his reckless career upon the institutions of his country. In this he has pursued the course of all those who have intended to usurp the liberties of the people. Cæsar, when he crossed the Rubicon, did it to bless the people *and preserve* the laws. He refused the crown that was *urged* upon him, and then took it to *please* the people. By what authority is it that the President makes his appeals to *the people*, as contra-distinguished from the laws and constitution of his country? He was elected, not by a simple majority of the whole, but by majorities from the States. Every principle in the constitution is against making this a simple majority Government. It was made, and can alone be altered by States. The States are equal in one branch; and even the representation in this House is differently modified from different States. Change this state of things, and convert it into a simple unmixed democracy, and you immediately raise one interest in society in deadly hostility against another, which must end, as all simple democracies have done, in a dictator or an elective but unlimited monarchy. To restrain the Executive interest in all Governments, there must be created some independent and antagonist interest in society, which shall be habitually felt in the practical operation of the Government. You have wisely abolished the aristocracy of the old world; but unless we substitute for it, in the action of this Government, the territorial interests of the States, to be felt in full effect through a co-ordinate branch, we have improved nothing on English liberty. The Executive, without this check, necessarily becomes the source of all honor and power, and absorbs all other interests.

Is this not the fact now? Is there a practical man here who does not know that the Executive is at this moment the controlling and unrestrained power of this confederacy? Is it not proclaimed with triumph that he has a majority in both Houses? Where then is the practical check?

I maintain, sir, that the Government in fact is changed, and has become absolute! Look at the history of the times, and doubt it if you can! Some two years since the President issued a proclamation for the open purpose of bringing down civil war upon an independent State of this Union. This extraordinary document declared that the States "*were not and never were* at any period sovereign and independent." This assertion was directly in the face of all history, for the Declaration of Independence itself announced that "*these colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent States.*" The second article of confederation declares that "*each State retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence.*" And yet, notwithstanding this bare-faced falsehood, what was the result? This instrument, by which the sovereignty, pride, self-respect, and independence of the States were cloven down by a single dash, was received amid hallelujahs; and the very States that were disgraced by it, instead of calling up the spirit of the entombed

Constitution, bowed down in subserviency, while the whole nation, by universal acclamation, seemed to join in the modern apotheosis of its nominal author. Is there any man now, who looks back coolly, that does not believe this to be the proclamation that changed the Republic?

And here let me refer to an instance as illustrating the change of the times, and to show that the whole country, the high and the low, are sinking under delusion into the universal "*humbuggery*" of the day. Last summer I observed an account of a large meeting in the refined, polished, and hospitable city of Boston, called to attend the ceremony of presenting *their* distinguished and intellectual *citizen* with a silver eup, on which was inscribed "the defender of the constitution." Who sustained the principles of the proclamation? who embodied them in the "Force Bill"? who carried that measure through, and placed it on the statute book, consecrating the usurpation of all power in the hands of the Executive? This "defender of the constitution." And it is remarkable that he, in the very speech in which he returned his thanks, declared that the constitution was virtually changed, and that all power was now in the hands of the Executive. I refer to this scene merely to show, that even the intelligent and educated are falling under the delusions of the day, and if they be so blind, what must be expected from others who bask in power and live by deception? I hope there is no man now, who can look back upon these two measures to which I have alluded, and then see what he now *knows* to exist around him, without learning some impressive and solemn lessons as to the downward career of the Republic.

But to return. While triumphal arches were raised, upon which was inscribed "the principles of the proclamation, the principles of New England"—while he whose whole life had been an open war upon all law was receiving in the halls of Universities the flattering unction of "Dr. of the learned laws" poured upon his head—what was the remarkable fact? He was then actually penning the order for the lawless seizure of the whole treasure of the nation.

Considering the state of things, this was a sagacious and profound move, and those who planned it well understood the downward progress of events, and the recorded history of liberty. Usurpation upon usurpation had been perpetrated. The great principles of the constitution had been subverted. This measure was absolutely necessary to sustain the power that had been acquired, and to transmit it to a successor. It diverted public attention from what had been done. Despotism and usurpation, in other countries, rely upon the sword and a standing army to sustain themselves; but from the nature of our institutions they are compelled here to rely upon leagued banks, *money*, office holders and office seekers, bribery and corruption. Lawless power here relies upon deception and fraud, while elsewhere it relies upon *force*.

I question very much whether, in this country, we can ever have even the privilege of an appeal to revolution. Each State has its own peculiar local interests and peculiar public opinion. This almost forbids all system and concert of action, and he who is at the head of affairs must have little talent indeed, if with his tremendous power and patronage, he is not able to play off one part of the community against the other. But there is another cause which I fear may prove fatal to the prospects of liberty. I very much doubt whether even a reform can ever take place. With our immense system of

credit, extending itself into all the ramifications of the community—with our *seven hundred* banks pressing down upon all the secret springs of society, and transacting business upon calculations made for the future—I say I doubt whether, under this vast and complicated system, the various interests of which no man can fathom, whether even reform can ever take place. All those who may be directly or indirectly (and who is not?) interested in this stupendous system, would prefer to acquiesce under a despotism rather than to run the hazard of a change from reform or revolution.

Those who seized the monied resources of the nation well knew the resistless power they were to wield, controlling as it does, directly and indirectly, at least *one hundred millions of capital*. Other people have to submit to the sword drawn over them by a conqueror, who may at least have the manliness of courage to command some respect, but we have to submit to a mean and infamous despotism, sustained by a monied power, controlling, through bribery and corruption, all that is abandoned and profligate in society. No wonder that “the whole nation is one common gambling house.”

Let us now look to a more recent event as distinctly marking this great change in our Government. And on this point I will take the facts as stated with so much spirit by the gallant gentleman from Virginia, (Mr. Wise,) and which I have never seen the slightest pretence to deny. I allude to the last night of the last Congress, when scenes occurred of the deepest importance to the liberties of this country. It was then that the President, with the first officer of his cabinet, and the second officer of the Government, came into the dark recesses of this Capitol, and, through his vile minions and miserable tools, defeated a measure of vast importance before this House for the notorious purpose of waging a popular war upon the Senate. Cromwell went into the House of Commons at the head of armed men and ordered its dissolution. But here, sir, we have a President who comes not like a soldier, but at the head of his servile courtiers and sycophants, and practically asserts his ascendancy over both branches of our Legislature by management and duplicity. Is this our independence under the constitution? Is this the check that we were designed to exercise by the provisions of that noble instrument? Where is the spirit of our forefathers? Better, far better for us to be “dogs and bay the moon,” or “toads and feed on the vapor of a dungeon,” than to hold our seats here only to disgrace the memory of those who have gone before us. I know that we are apt to become indifferent and callous under the habitual contemplation of evils which seem almost to forbid a remedy. And it is from this that liberty is lost. We sit here and see things which we have not the courage or manliness to resist.

What is now passing before this country in the history of the day? An attempt is now openly being made to *expunge* the constitution, and drag down the Senate in humble penitence before a master for having dared to express an independent sentiment. If this succeeds, it will be the consummation of our downfall.

Sir: I am aware that under certain circumstances an individual may desire that his crimes should be expunged from the memory of man—I am aware that there are those who would desire to convert the whole earth into one universal pandimoneum, only that they might become prominent from their very iniquity and reign triumphant from their very guilt. But I am totally at a loss to understand the feelings that could prompt any human being to desire to see a whole body of men, intended by our ancestors to be

exalted and independent, bowing around the throne of a lawless and reckless man—bearing in their hands the Constitution to be burned, that the smoke thereof may rise to satiate his vengeance and appease his wrath. Sir, *it is, it is* the reign of Cæsar, and we are cowards, dastards, slaves, if we submit to this state of things, and shall deserve to have our children raise before us their little hands, and shake their manacles, saying *thou did it, thou did it*.

Mr. Chairman, I have said that this is the reign of Cæsar. Sir, I have read the history of the Roman people to little advantage, if I am to be deceived at this late day in what I see passing around me. We are now where that people were when the empire was to be divided between Anthony Octavius and Lepidus. Cæsar had folded his robes and perished under the dagger of Brutus. And although we may have none at present with the fine talents and acquirements of Anthony, yet we have many with his private profligacy and abandoned principles. As to Lepidus, I need only point to the gentleman from Kentucky, (Mr. R. M. Johnson,) but as he is a member of this House I forbear to trace the parallel at present. The beardless Octavius had done nothing to identify himself with the glory and the honor of his country, but he became prominent from the fact that he was supposed to inherit the sympathy that was then running so strong in favor of the fallen Cæsar. Wary, artful, and sagacious, he saw his position and made the most of it.

We too have a modern Octavius, who, winding his way under the robes of *royal favor*, proclaims himself the true and anointed successor, pledged to carry out the principles of his master. What other earthly claim has the Vice President to his present position, except that he is supposed to be the chosen favorite of him who has trampled over the liberties of his country? The gentleman from New York (Mr. McKean) has declared him to be the only candidate who has claims upon the whole Union.

For the present I pass by an investigation into his political principles, and shall only refer to one document, which speaks a language not to be mistaken, and develops the feelings and the nature of the man—which writes his history and his character more fully than all the volumes that can be composed by a flattering biographer. No man can read it without knowing its author. It is a letter written from London, in answer to a committee in New York, who condoled with him for his rejection as minister to the court of St. James. I will read from it the following extract in relation to Genl. Jackson:

“In testifying to my public conduct, they are pleased to speak with eulogium of me, as contributing, while in the cabinet, to the success of the present administration. That signal success, I feel called upon to declare, is pre-eminently due to the political sagacity, unwearied industry, and upright straight forward course of our present venerated chief. All the humble merit I can claim is, that of having exerted myself to the utmost to execute his patriotic and single-hearted views, and of having sacrificed all personal considerations to ensure their success, when threatened with extraneous embarrassments. That my exertions were arduous, painful, and incessant, I may without vanity assert; whether my sacrifices have not been repaid with unmerited detraction and reproach, I leave to my countrymen to determine. Still I shall ever regard my situation in that cabinet as one of the most fortunate events of my life, placing as it did me in close and familiar relation with one who has well been described by Mr. Jefferson as “possessing more of the Roman in his character than any man living,” and whose administration will be looked to, in future times, as a golden era in

our history. To have served under such a *chief*, at such a time, and to have won his confidence and esteem, is a sufficient *glory*; and of that, thank God, my enemies cannot deprive me."

Mr. Chairman, I am perfectly aware that many a man might have uttered such sentiments without any extraordinary degradation. If they had come from one who had for ever retired into private life, it would have been of no great importance. If they had come from one who was humble and lowly, and had received private favors from a benefactor, it would have attracted no attention. But coming as they did from one who was artful and sagacious—who had fixed his eye on the first offices of his country with an ambition that has never varied—who was gazing with eagerness for partisan support—I say, sir, that under all the circumstances of the case, they are *base*, vile, *degraded*, and degrading sentiments, which no freeman ever conceived in his heart, and none but a flatterer ever uttered. If I am to have a *leader*, in the name of all that is lofty and honorable, let him be one who has the *feelings*, the *independence*, the *heart* of a man. If I am to follow, let it not be one who cringes before, and fawns upon the hand of a *master*. Every feeling of my soul revolts with scorn and indignation at such sentiments.

But, sir, look around, and what is the glaring fact in the history of the day? These sentiments have had their weight. Is not the whole patronage and power of this Government, at this moment, wielded for the open purpose of rewarding their author? Is it to be disguised that the Baltimore convention assembled to nominate a successor under the *dictation* of the President? Is there a man, who has sagacity to perceive consequences, that doubts it? Let those things succeed, and it is idle to talk about a free government. We may have the exterior of freedom, but it will be a whitened sepulchre, fair and beautiful to look on, but full of corruption and rottenness within.

I commit no man nor no party, but I here take opportunity to lay down the doctrine that he who comes into power under such circumstances, comes in, to all intents and purposes, as much a *usurper* as if he had come in by the sword of revolution. Such a government is to be obeyed merely from political expediency, and *not constitutional obligation*. What difference, in fact, is there between a government brought upon the country by presidential dictation, fraud, and patronage, and one forced upon us by the arms of a conqueror?

In those countries where the succession may be fixed by the hereditary laws of the land—where things have grown up from time immemorial, and become the fixed principles of the constitution, a people can make claims to freedom, if the succession take place consistent with their institutions. But in this country, where we have a written constitution, every line of which maintains the freedom of the elective franchise, from the highest to the lowest, if *we* submit to dictation or appointment, directly or indirectly, from any earthly power, we are slaves in feeling and in fact, and shall deserve our destiny.

The janissaries of Turkey could at one time bow-string a sultan, and enthrone his successor. A Roman despot could at one time make his horse a consul, while his degenerate countrymen cowered beneath the imperial eagles waving along the lines of Prætoorean bands. Cromwell anointed himself as one prepared to be a martyr, and called upon his round-head followers to baptize him in the blood of Charles the First, that he might come out a saint fit to wear the robes of a dictator, and claim the sworn allegiance of a deluded and enslaved people.

True, we have no janissaries--no Prætoorean bands--no army of the commonwealth, as yet. But we have what is meaner, baser, and more degrading--we have a hundred thousand office holders and office seekers--monied corporations from one end of the Union to the other--we have the patronage of this Government and the power and popularity of the President--*all, all* acting together in concert, and devoted to the sole object of appointing a successor, and transmitting ill-gotten power to those who will fawn to receive it. I care not what may be the principles to be avowed by such an administration, I make open uncompromising war against the mode and manner of appointment.

How long are these things to last? Are they to be borne by a free people? Think you that one half of this great nation is for ever to be ruled over by the other half, upon such principles as these? Think you that the intellectual and virtuous of a great people are for ever to be trampled over and spurned by ignorance and brutal numbers? No, sir, it is not nature to bear it. The worm that crawls in the dust will turn when tread on. And shall man, rational man, sink himself lower than the vilest of creation? Sir, if these things are to be borne, go first and tear from the pages of history those leaves which transmit to posterity our glory and our honor--go first and gather together the Declarations of our Independence and make of them a bon-fire--go first to the graves of our gallant dead, harrow up their bones, and scatter to the four winds of Heaven their dust and their ashes--tell our little children these men are unworthy to be remembered, and their deeds to be imitated; we must then do more--change the very names of our own children--aye, we must change their very natures--turn back the current that now runs warm from their hearts, and run it into new channels pull down the star-spangled banner and trample it in the dust beneath your feet--then, and not until then, shall we be prepared to wear in peace the chains of slaves and the livery of bondsmen.

Mr. Chairman, I am aware that I have uttered sentiments ill calculated to suit the public ear--I know, sir, that I have uttered sentiments which for ever cut me off from all hope of favor from this Government, or with those who are destined to control it. But I stand here to speak the truth to my country. What is a man born for? Is it that, through deception and sycophancy, he may wind his way to power? Is it that, for the day, he may catch passing popularity, that miserable mushroom thing which springs up in the moisture and darkness of night, only to wither and die under the beams of the noon-day sun? No, sir, man lives that he may live hereafter, in the hearts and affections of his countrymen, for having vindicated their interests, their honor, and their liberties. This, in my opinion, is the highest destiny that awaits an earthly career.





